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SINGLE PARENTS: COPING STYLES

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of the
School of Theology at Claremont

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
John T. Elmore
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This dissertation, written by

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*has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty
of the School of Theology at Claremont in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of*

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Dedicated to the
single parents
of this study

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Purpose

This dissertation is to be an exploratory survey of some of the ways seven female single parents coped with their singleness after three years in a growth group. Developing a theology of coping and describing some implications for ministry to single parents will round out the purpose of this dissertation. This is not intended to be an exhaustive or in-depth study of all the implications of single parenthood. Instead, it is to be a small probe in a special field of psycho-social transition which has had very little investigation. It is intended to be a preliminary, exploratory study which will suggest some of the areas that need further research.

Statement of the Problem

Coping with life is one of the functions which all humans share. Some people seem better able to cope in any given circumstance than other people. Almost any transition of major importance in life leads people to establish new forms of dealing with the impact of that transition. Divorce qualifies as a major transition in most single parents' lives. For some divorced persons, the ability to cope is distorted to such a degree that everyday decisions become traumatic experiences. This study examines the ways a small group of female

single parents coped.

Importance of the Study

One person every four minutes becomes a single parent. One in ten families is headed by a woman. These female-headed families care for eight million children. The median income for the single parent mother is \$4,000, compared with \$11,600 for families headed by men. Only 9% of the families headed by women in 1969 had an income over \$10,000.¹

The 1970 United States Summary indicates that there were 5.5 million families headed by a female, and these families had 3.3 family members. In contrast, there were 44.0 million families headed by husband-wife teams which averaged 3.6 family members. Of the 5.5 million families headed by women, 4.2 million were white and 1.3 million were black. The blacks averaged 4.0 members per family, while the whites averaged 3.0.² Only 700 thousand white female single parents had one or more years of college, while 1.3 million had completed high school.³

California leads the nation in the total number of females ever married (6.0 million) and is second (Nevada is first, 31.2%) in

¹Benjamin Schlesinger, *The One-Parent Family* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), pp. 117-119.

²U. S. Department of the Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *United States Summary, 1970 Census*, Table 208, p. 1-664.

³*Ibid.*, p. 1-666.

percentage divorced (22.8%). After Nevada and California, come Oregon (21.4%) and Washington (21.0%), while fifth place goes to Arizona (20.1%).⁴

In the Orange County area of Southern California there were 31 thousand families headed by white women in the 1970 census. Of these, 1.3 thousand were in the city of Buena Park.⁵ Some of the group members examined in this dissertation lived in Buena Park.

The heavy preponderance of single parent families of the matriarchal type is better understood when one considers that most divorce actions give the mother custody of the children. In most desertion cases, it is the father who leaves the home. Also, most husbands die before their wives; hence there are more widows. And lastly, often the unwed mother will elect to keep her baby; rarely does the unwed father have even the option to keep the baby.

These figures indicate part of the importance of this study. Another factor is a socially negative reaction toward single parents; they are considered abnormal.⁶ The central concept of a "normal" family is the nuclear family, a family with a father, mother, and children, living together. The marginal status of single parents is reflected in other terms used to refer to them: broken home, mother-centered home, only parent, one-parent family, parent without partner.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 1-6626.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 6-161.

⁶Arlene S. and Jerome H. Skolnick (eds.) *Family in Transition* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971), pp. 408-410.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to the seven people who made up the core of the growth group. These seven were selected because they had been in the growth group the longest (three years), and had attended most (90%) of the meetings. There were other members of the growth group who were not included in this study because they had not been regular (at least 70% of the meetings) in attendance, or had not been in the group for a sufficient (one year) length of time. Other members of the group were not included because they had moved away, remarried, or contact had been lost. However the seven studied here are fairly representative of the others in the group not reported on, in my opinion.

Definition of Terms

Single parent. For purposes of this dissertation, a single parent means a person who has custody of children and is head of the family. This definition describes only those single parents in the study group. The group felt that single parents who did not have custody of their children had different needs and would not benefit greatly from the group. In all cases the single parent has been separated and has either been in the process of divorce, or has already completed the dissolution of the marriage. Fathers rarely, up until recently, were awarded custody of their children and for this reason the group consisted almost wholly of mothers and their children. We had no single parents who had custody of stepchildren.

Coping. Coping has to do with how well any given task or decision is accomplished and the relative cost to the person for this accomplishment. It has to do with a struggle. It means to contend successfully or unsuccessfully with their singleness. It is an adaptive behavioral process to deal with threats to well-being.

Styles. A style is a pattern used in coping. It is a matter of strategy. It can involve flexible management, or rigid adherence, in dealing with the challenges of an environment. Style can involve the timing of a response to deal with problems or needs. There may be one or more styles for any given problem. In Chapter III "style" and "strategy" are used interchangeably.

Methodology of the Study

A case study interview was done privately with each of the seven single parents. The interview began with the completion of the Biographical Profile⁷ which contained 25 items pertaining to education, religion, marital data, income, and the interviewee's own family. It was followed by the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis Profile which was used to obtain a profile of nine traits and was selected for its accessibility, ease of use, and widespread use with counselors. The Profile was easy to administer, quick to tabulate, and contained the elements which I felt were important to gather from this group. The cost of the Profile was within reason. After a brief rest break, the

⁷See Appendix A.

Questionnaire on Coping⁸ was given and the verbal responses were tape-recorded with the interviewee's permission. The Questionnaire was developed by myself from four articles in *Archives of General Psychiatry* related to coping, and from my own questions on coping. The 45 questions were arranged in such a way that the first 35 would prepare the single parent for the remaining list of 10 coping strategies on the last page. The total time involved in each interview averaged about two hours and fifteen minutes.

A case study of each of the seven single parents was compiled⁹ from the above three tools. From these seven case studies a summary was made and an "average" was tabulated. Next, the coping styles were rank ordered. Then, the rank ordered coping styles were compared with the results of the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis Profile to determine if there was a relationship between a relative need for improvement, as determined from the T-J TAP, and the total strategies used.

⁸See Appendix B.

⁹See Chapter III.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The following books constitute major studies and sources of information regarding single parents. Their major ideas will be reviewed and evaluated as background material for my study. The first book, *Parents Without Partners*, is widely known. The second book, *Children of Divorce*, is one of the earliest written on the topic. The next three, *The World of the Formerly Married*, *After Divorce*, and *Remarriage, A Study of Marriage*, are all comprehensive, intensive, and systematic. *When Parents Divorce*, *The Divorced Mother*, and *The Boys and Girls Book about Divorce*, are supportive, informative, and concerned about the children in the family of divorced people. *The One-Parent Family* is a brief book with an annotated bibliography of single parent research.

EGLESON, J., and Janet F. Egleson. *Parents Without Partners*. New York: Dutton, 1961.

Mr. Egleson is one of the founders of the organization Parents Without Partners, established in 1957 for the purpose of bringing together divorced and bereaved parents. Though the social needs of single parents were to be met through the organization, the major aim of the founders was to provide a forum where, with the help of experts, the parents could share their experiences and find new and more satisfactory approaches to the problems they faced within themselves, with

their former partners, and especially with their children. The authors give many illustrations, quoting from single parents and experts, and give practical advice for meeting many post-divorce problems. At times, the underlying tone of their advice is a little oversolicitous and tends to encourage self-pity. Their overall point of view is very similar to Dr. Despert's (see following review), to whom they give much credit. The major criticism of this book is that the Eglesons do not fully recognize the divorce situation as a type of family structure that has its special meanings and should be handled accordingly. The Eglesons' advice is often based on the "friendly divorce" approach urging the ex-partners to get together for the sake of their children.

DESPERT, J. Louise. *Children of Divorce*. Garden City:
Doubleday, 1953.

Writing from a psychological point of view and focusing on the needs and problems of children from divorced families, Dr. Despert repeatedly emphasizes that divorce need not be a disaster for children. She maintains that the crucial factor in the disturbance of children is the emotional estrangement between parents. Well illustrated by many cases, her discussion includes a large range of practical questions, so that divorced parents can help their children better adapt themselves to their separation. Many of the points are aimed at the divorced persons to help them work together for the welfare of their children. For example, she suggests that each parent help the children to have positive images of each other.

HUNT, Morton M. *The World of the Formerly Married*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966.

This is a rather comprehensive review. In this book Hunt coins the term "FM" for Formerly Married. Relationships with children are featured although numerous other descriptions of single parents are listed. The author's attempts to be sympathetically neutral leads to the notion that what he finds is what should be. This implicitly suggests to the reader that he identify with the FM's biggest headache: his lament, "Woe is me." Hunt makes the FM world sound like an especially difficult world in which to move, and this encourages self-pity.

GOODE, William J. *After Divorce*. New York: Free Press, 1956.

There are few intensive and systematic studies on the way it feels to be divorced, but this is one of them. Though Goode interviewed only women, mainly from the lower socio-economic group, his findings should be of real interest to both sexes and to other classes. Among his interesting conclusions are that most women take marriage seriously, that the trauma of marital failure occurs long before the actual decision to divorce, and that once the battle is ended and the couple decide to part, there is usually a feeling of relief and no regrets. Goode has something to say about the inadequate use of courtship as a contributing factor to marital failure. He also stresses that divorce is related to economic factors among the economically underprivileged and that divorce cannot be simply explained by one

set of factors. Another point made by Goode is that divorce is not bad for children, at least as testified to by their mothers, who believed that they were better off with one parent than with two unhappy ones.

BERNARD, Jessie. *Remarriage: A Study of Marriage*. New York: Dryden Press, 1956.

In this text Dr. Bernard reports on her research based on 2,009 cases of remarriage, and reviews and summarizes other pertinent studies on the problem. Dr. Bernard presents a comprehensive theory for understanding research findings, and discusses a wide range of practical issues that arise in remarriages. Dr. Bernard approaches the problems of divorced and widowed who remarry with an excellent combination of great technical facility and a balanced human understanding of those issues confronting individuals in making a go of marriage. She looks at the problems of broken marriage from many points of view, and though she does not sweeten the difficulties faced by those who are on the "second time around," she presents the data and her interpretations with a rare integration of compassion and scientific detachment.

STEINZOR, Bernard. *When Parents Divorce*. New York: Pantheon, 1969.

Dr. Steinzor, a psychologist, stresses that divorce need not be a tragedy, but that an unhappy marriage is one. His book is meant to help both parent and child change a period of turbulence into a

period of growth and adjustment. He covers visitation rights, property settlement, dating, and remarriage in a supportive, affirmative manner that is clear and easy to read. One of the opportunities of divorce is that "the emotional smog smothering the whole family in an early spiritual death is cleared away." The author is as concerned with children as he is with parents.

BOHANNAN, Paul (ed.) *Divorce and After*. New York: Doubleday, 1971.

Professor Bohannon has edited a very compact book using some well known experts in the field of divorce and its after effects. The second and third chapters, "The Six Stations of Divorce," and "Reactions of Friends to Divorce" were the best in the book for me. The six stations tell of the different types of divorce: the emotional divorce, the legal divorce, the economic divorce, the co-parental divorce, the community divorce, and the psychic divorce. Much of the book is devoted to divorce around the world, divorce laws, and divorce reform.

MINDEY, Carol. *The Divorced Mother*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969.

As a single parent for six years Mindey writes with empathy and insight into the problems of divorce. The book is oriented to the mother, however fathers would find it helpful. Her stance is that children are better off in a home with one happy, rational parent than in a home where the parents are miserable and neurotic. Mindey has written a straight from the shoulder, easy to read, astute text.

GARDNER, Richard A. *The Boys and Girls Book About Divorce*.
New York: Science House, 1970.

This unique and well illustrated book is to be read by children. Gardner, as a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, has combined the best of insight with the best of sensible helpful instructions to children. "How to get along with your divorced mother," "Who's to blame?" and other problems are carefully examined by this author who has a vast background with divorced parents and their children. He is positive and supportive.

SCHLESINGER, Benjamin. *The One-Parent Family: Perspectives and Annotated Bibliography*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969.

Dr. Schlesinger's book is in two parts; the first has a series of general essays on one-parent families, while the second has 314 annotations of books, pamphlets, and journal articles on various forms of single parenthood. This is a thin book with an enormous amount of resources listed. Much of it is devoted to Canadian publications.

CHAPTER III

THE STUDY

Each of the seven case studies in this chapter will follow the same basic pattern; first the Biographical profile information, then the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis Profile percentiles, and finally the results of the Questionnaire on Coping will be presented.

These seven are used as a basis for the profile of the "average" single parent studied. However, individual cases will be examined near the end of the chapter.

Case Study of "A"

"A" was 40 years old, female, white, had 17 years of education, Protestant, divorced, 23 years old when first married, and was married for 13 years to the same man. Her ex-husband was a salesman with 12 years of education. She had custody of two children in her home; one female, age 16, and one male, age 13 years. This family of three lived on an income of \$10,000 to \$12,000 per year. "A" was born in Inglewood, California and had one younger sister. She was a school teacher and her parents were still married.

The following percentiles were the results of her responses to the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis Profile: Nervous, 44; Depressive, 55; Active-Social, 77; Expressive-Responsive, 53; Sympathetic, 87; Subjective, 17; Dominant, 77; Hostile, 71; Self-disciplined, 23.

"A" indicated on the Questionnaire that her feelings regarding her past were positive; her current situation was extremely positive, and the future was positive. She felt her mood was happy, her degree of guilt was mild, and her suicide preoccupation was none.

"A" kept distress within manageable limits by talking to her friends about the problem, keeping busy, and when very distressed, to sit and worry. She did not try to maintain a sense of personal worth, because she did not feel lacking in that area. Restoring relationships were not generally a problem with her.

"A" answered "yes" to all the questions about seeking advance information in a new situation, in a new role, about future difficulties, in using friendships in seeking information, in looking for intellectual stimulation through discussion groups, in pooling coping skills, seeking support in times of crisis, and in using alternative paths to personal fulfillment.

A clear self-image as an effective doer was projected by "A" to other people. Some new combinations of skills were mobilized. She would use peers as resource persons, and would recenter her efforts for long-term purposes. Interpersonal support was sought, and on occasion, self-manipulation of feelings was used to maintain self-worth.

Coping skills acquired in an early part of her life helped her in a more recent period of time. She felt cuddling somehow helped her to cope. There was a supportive function in shared experiences, and worry had no usefulness. Generally, fantasy of future behavior was not useful. She felt that past success helped one to succeed in the

future.

For "A" the hardest thing to cope with was the feeling of being "dropped" during the divorce. She had expected to remain married all her life. Her most used method of coping was being with people or talking to them. Her worst way of coping was to sit and feel sorry for herself. She felt good when she was coping. However, when she was not coping very well she had a "crummy" or depressed feeling. The group helped "A" by being a place where she could bring acute problems to discuss. She also was able to see others in worse shape than herself.

Sometimes "A" tried to seek additional information, and "very often" she talked to others about her problems. She "occasionally" tried to see the humorous aspects of a situation. "Never" did she not worry about something in hopes of it turning out fine. "Sometimes" she involved herself in other activities to take her mind off her problems. Taking some positive action occurred "sometimes," but she was "never" prepared to expect the worst. "Sometimes" she made alternate plans for handling a situation, and "often" her past experiences or tension reduction were used.

Case Study of "B"

"B" was 36 years old, white, female, with 15 years of education, Catholic, and divorced. She was 23 years old when first married and was married for 10 years. She had been a single parent for 3 years and had never remarried. Her ex-spouse was an engineer with 16 years of

education. She had custody of 3 children in her home: 2 females, ages 5 and 10 years, and a male age 8 years. She lived on \$8,000 to \$10,000 per year. She was born in Los Angeles, and had a younger sister. Her father remarried after the death of his wife. "B" was a secretary.

Her responses to the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis Profile indicated the following information: Nervous, 72; Depressive, 72; Active-Social, 98; Expressive-Responsive, 80; Sympathetic, 78; Subjective, 72; Dominant, 77; Hostile, 78; Self-disciplined, 45.

Her attitude regarding her past was positive; regarding her current situation, positive; and regarding the future, positive. She felt her mood to be happy, her guilt as none, and her suicide pre-occupation as none.

"B" evaluated the two important areas in her life, herself and her children, in order to keep distress within manageable limits. When she felt self-worth slipping, she would go after "strokes" from someone who cared. In order to restore relationships with other people, she would let them know how significant she felt they were to her.

Seeking new information about new situations and roles was always done, according to her statements. She did not feel that seeking information about future difficulties was worthwhile until the difficulties actually happened. She felt that she used friendships in seeking information, looked for intellectual stimulation through discussion groups, and pooled information and coping skills. During

times of crisis, support was always sought. One of her ways to use an alternative path to personal fulfillment was to lose 85 pounds of weight as a member of Weight Watchers.

"Yes," was the answer to questions on attempting to project a clear self-image as an effective doer, mobilizing new combinations of skills, using peers as resource persons, recentering efforts for a long-term purpose, using interpersonal support, and self-manipulating feelings to maintain self-worth. She felt that positive thinking was a help in maintaining self-worth.

In her youth she had much responsibility, which helped her to cope in more recent times. She did not feel that being held or cuddled helped her to cope. She said being held blows her mind; she wants to get physically involved when cuddled. There was a definite supportive function in shared experiences. Worry was never useful, while fantasy of future behavior was always useful. A past success made the next problem easier to handle.

Coming across to other people as too self-assured and confident was the hardest thing she had to cope with as a single parent. "B's" most used method of coping was to use other people, in a good sense. Her worst way of coping was to try to do things all by herself. When she was coping, she tended to feel positive about using other people. She felt weak, when she relied only on herself. When she was not coping well, she felt fear and panic. The group helped her to learn more about herself.

"Very often," "B" sought additional information and talked with

others about a problem. The humorous aspects of any situation were sought "all the time." "Sometimes" she tried not to worry about something, and "very often" she would become involved in other activities, in order to take her mind off the problem. "Sometimes" she took positive action. She expected the worst "all the time" in relations with men. Otherwise, she "never" expected the worst from life in general. Alternate plans were used "very often," as was drawing upon past experiences. She tried to reduce her tension by smoking.

Case Study of "C"

"C" was 34, white, female, with 16 years of education, a teacher, Protestant, divorced, age 22 when first married, married for 7 years to the same man, and had been a single parent for 4 years at the end of the group. Her ex-husband was a teacher, had 18 years of education, and remarried. "C" had custody of one 8 year old male, and they lived on \$8,000 to \$10,000 per year. She was born in a country town in Montana, and had one older sister. Her parents were divorced and her father remarried.

"C's" response to the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis Profile indicated the following percentiles: Nervous, 9; Depressive, 3; Active-Social, 45; Expressive-Responsive, 33; Sympathetic, 35; Subjective, 27; Dominant, 91; Hostile, 18; Self-disciplined, 93.

Her responses to the Questionnaire are as follows: feelings regarding her past were positive; regarding her current situation, extremely positive; and regarding the future, extremely positive. Her

mood was described as happy, with no degree of guilt, and no suicide preoccupation.

"C" kept distress within manageable limits by keeping busy at her teaching job, with her child, with friends, and by having many projects and activities in the home and in the community. She felt she maintained a sense of personal worth by being important to her child and to her friends. She had no problems restoring relationships with other people.

While she sought advance information about a new situation, she did not seek information about new roles. She felt seeking information about future difficulties was worthwhile. Friendships were used in seeking information. Discussion groups were a place to find intellectual stimulation, and information and coping skills were pooled with other people. Friends and parents were support people during times of crisis, while alternative paths to personal fulfillment included her job, her child, and her friends.

"C" tries hard to project a clear self-image as an effective doer, especially in the areas of teacher, mother, confidante, advisor, and friend. She tries to mobilize new combinations of skills, and peers are often used as resource persons. She does not try to recenter her efforts for a long-term purpose, since she has reached her goals. She constantly uses interpersonal support. Self-manipulation of feelings is not done to maintain a sense of self-worth.

Childhood coping skills have helped "C" in a more recent period in her life. Being held was nice, but was not a means of coping.

She did feel that there was a supportive function in shared experiences. She did not feel that she worried very often. Fantasy of future behavior was useful, if it was realistic, like meeting a new person. She felt a past success made another one more possible.

The hardest thing "C" had to cope with was being acceptable and accepted. She would like to have more flexibility. Her most used method of coping was to keep busy. She organized plans for dealing with problems. Worry was her worst way of coping. Great satisfaction and happiness were her feelings when she was coping. When she was not coping, she felt dissatisfaction, and a desire to withdraw from people, but never helplessness. The group helped "C" indirectly; as a support group.

"Sometimes" "C" tried to find out more about the situation, and would "sometimes" talk with others about her problems. "Very often," she looked for the humorous aspects of the situation. "Never" did she feel everything would turn out fine and not to worry about it. "Sometimes" she would become involved in other activities, and would "sometimes" take positive action. "Never" did she want to expect the worst. Several plans for handling a situation were "never" a strategy. "Sometimes" she drew upon past experiences. Because she quit smoking during the end of the group, she was able to answer she "never" tries to reduce tension by drinking, eating, smoking, exercise, or the use of pills.

Case Study of "D"

"D" was 37 years of age, white, female, with 14 years of education, Protestant, divorced, and worked as a secretary. She was 23 years old when first married and was married for 12 years to the same husband. She had been a single parent for 2 years and had never remarried. Her ex-husband was a college professor with 20 years of education. "D" had custody of one female, age 9 years. She lived on \$10,000 to \$12,000 per year. She was born on a farm in North Carolina. She was the youngest of two brothers and two sisters. Her parents were divorced, with her mother remarried. "D" was a secretary.

Her response to the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis indicated the following percentiles: Nervous, 85; Depressive, 49; Active-Social, 40; Expressive-Responsive, 80; Sympathetic, 98; Subjective, 92; Dominant, 47; Hostile, 60; Self-disciplined, 53.

"D's" attitude regarding her past was mildly positive; regarding her current situation, mildly positive; and regarding her future, mildly positive. She felt her mood to be somewhat happy, her guilt as none, and her suicide preoccupation as mild.

Distress was kept within manageable limits by using reason. Maintaining a sense of personal worth was no problem. She restored relationships with other people by apologies, as well as with analysis of the problem.

"D" answered "yes" to all the questions in the section such as: Have you ever sought advance information about a new situation, sought information about new roles, sought information about future difficul-

ties, used friendships in seeking information, looked for intellectual stimulation through information discussion groups, pooled information and coping skills, sought support in times of crisis, and used alternative paths to personal fulfillment.

She tried to project a clear self-image as an effective doer, and mobilized new combinations of skills. She also used other peers as resource persons, recentered her efforts for a long-term purpose, and used interpersonal support. She did not use self-manipulation of feelings and attitudes to maintain self-worth. Instead she used action.

"D" felt that coping skills acquired in an earlier period of her life helped her in a more recent time. Being held or cuddled, helped her to cope. She felt there was a supportive function in shared experiences. There was no usefulness in worry, but there was usefulness in fantasy of future behavior. She felt that having succeeded once, the next time was easier.

The hardest thing "D" had to cope with was anxiety. Her most used method of coping was analysis of the problem. Her worst way of coping was overreaction. When she was coping, she felt confident. When she was not coping, she felt hysterical. The group helped her to cope by the comparison of feelings between the members.

"Often" she would try to find out more about a situation. "Very often" she would talk with others about the problem. "Very often" "D" felt that everything would probably work out fine, and did not worry about it. Becoming involved in other activities in order to keep her mind off a problem was done "very often" by "D". "Very often"

she would take some positive concerted action on the basis of her present understanding of a situation. Being prepared to expect the worst was "never" done. She "never" made several alternate plans for handling a situation. "Sometimes" she drew upon past experiences, and "sometimes" she tried to reduce the tension by pills.

Case Study of "E"

"E" was 42 years old, female, white, had 14 years of education, Protestant, separated, 24 years old when first married, married for 16 years, and separated for 2-1/2 years. Her spouse is a civil engineer with 16 years of education. "E" had custody of two female children in her home, ages 10 and 12. She lived on an income of \$8,000 to \$10,000 per year. She was born in a small city in Illinois as an only child. Her parents were still married. "E" was a secretary.

"E's" responses to the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis revealed the following percentiles: Nervous, 97; Depressive, 99; Active-Social, 40; Expressive-Responsive, 14; Sympathetic, 9; Subjective, 99; Dominant, 16; Hostile, 99; Self-disciplined, 4

Her response to the Questionnaire indicated that she felt negative about her past, negative about her current situation, and extremely negative regarding her future. She described her mood as sad, her degree of guilt as moderate, and her suicide preoccupation as moderate.

She kept distress within manageable limits by using tranquilizers, and talking with others. Her sense of personal worth depended

on other's opinions of her; positive feedback. Mostly she felt negative and worthless. Since she did not have too many relationships with other people, she did not have a problem with restoring relationships.

"E" answered that she did the following: sought advance information about a new situation; sought information about new roles; sought information about future difficulties; used friendships in seeking information; looked for intellectual stimulation through discussion groups; pooled information and coping skills; sought support in times of crisis; and used alternative paths to personal fulfillment.

She felt that she projected a clear self-image as an efficient doer, but was not too independent. The ability to mobilize new combinations skills was at a standstill. Peers were used as resource persons. She did not have a long-term purpose. Interpersonal support was used. She did not try to self-manipulate her feelings and attitudes to maintain self-worth.

"E" felt that she was coping as poorly now as 20 years ago. She liked to help and felt that there was a supportive function in shared experiences. There was no usefulness in worry. Fantasy of future behavior was useful. She felt that success made the next problem easier to handle.

Loneliness, financial worry, and worry about the future of society and her children's future were the hardest things she had to cope with. Anger and hostility were her most used methods of coping, and were also her worst ways of coping. She felt positive when coping well, and tended to like herself more. When not coping, she disliked

herself and felt like a failure. She felt the group helped her, but only when the group actually functioned.

She stated that she "sometimes" tried to find out more about a situation. "Very often" she talked with others about a problem. "Never" did she try to see the humorous aspects of a situation. "Never" did she not try to worry about a problem. "Sometimes" she would become involved in other activities to keep her mind off the problem. She felt that she "never" took some positive action on the basis of her present understanding of the problem. "Sometimes" she expected the worst to happen. "Never" did she try to make alternate plans for handling a situation; if anything, she felt at a total standstill. She did not feel that her past experiences could help her at the present time, since she was no better in the past at coping than at the present. She did try to reduce her tension by eating and with pills.

Case Study of "F"

"F" was 43 years old, white, a nurse with one year of graduate study, a Protestant, divorced, 25 years old when first married, and married for 16 years to the same man. She had been divorced for 2 years at the end of the study group of single parents. Her ex-spouse was a hospital administrator with 18 years of education. She had custody of four children at home: one male 17 years; three females, ages 11, 11 (twins), and 15. Her income was \$12,000 to \$14,000 per year. She had been born in Toronto, Canada, and grew up in a large city as an only child. Her own parents were still married. "F" was a nurse.

"F's" responses to the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis Profile indicated these results: Nervous, 72; Depressive, 59; Active-Social, 66; Expressive-Responsive, 42; Sympathetic, 98; Subjective, 72; Dominant, 14; Hostile, 0; Self-disciplined, 37.

Her response to the Questionnaire showed that she was mildly negative about her past, positive about her current situation, and mildly positive about her future. She said her mood was happy, with a mild degree of guilt, and no suicide preoccupation.

"F" used hard work, to the point of near exhaustion, to keep distress within manageable limits. Her sense of accomplishment in her job, and the appreciation from other people, helped her to maintain a sense of personal worth. She bent over backwards to restore broken relationships with significant other people, she stated.

A great deal of advance information had been sought by "F" during her preparation for her return to nursing. Only a little bit of new role information had been sought. She sought information about future difficulties, especially in the area of her children's education and their future. Frequently she used friendships in seeking information. Mainly a listener, "F" did look for intellectual stimulation through discussion groups. She felt that she pooled information and coping skills all the time, especially at work. A great deal of support during times of crisis had been sought. "F" felt she had one major and several minor paths to personal fulfillment--the major path being her ability in nursing.

"F" tried to project a clear self-image as an effective doer.

Attempts had been made to mobilize new combinations of skills, but she felt she could do better. Other peers were used as resource persons a great deal. Nursing was her attempt to recenter her efforts for a long-term purpose. Interpersonal support and self-manipulation of feelings to maintain self-worth were used by "F".

She said her ability to study nursing early in her life aided her more recently as a coping skill. Being held or cuddled was an effective help in coping. She felt there was a supportive function in shared experiences. Worry could be useful if she tried to make it lead to solutions of problems. Fantasy could be useful if not carried too far; not to live in a dream world all the time. She felt that a past success helped to make the next problem easier to overcome.

The hardest thing "F" had to cope with was having to make the important decisions regarding the children by herself. Logic, reason, and thinking things out were her most used methods of coping. Deciding to put off deciding, and drinking too much were her worst ways of coping. She had feelings of happiness, contentment, and accomplishment when she was coping. Self-critical was her feeling when she was not coping. The group helped her to cope by relating to others in the group, gaining from my response and guidance, and from the group's response to her.

"Very often" "F" tried to find out more about a situation. She talked with others "very often" about a problem. The humorous aspects of situations were sought "very often." "Sometimes" she tried not to worry about a problem. "Very often" she became involved in

other activities to keep her mind off the problem. "Sometimes" she took positive action based on her understanding of a problem. She "never" tried to be prepared to expect the worst, but "sometimes" she made alternate plans for handling a situation. "Very often" she drew upon past experiences to handle a situation. Since she quit drinking, she "never" tried to reduce her tension by drinking, eating, smoking, exercise, or pills.

Case Study of "G"

"G" was white, high school educated, Protestant, age 29, divorced once, and 19 when first married. She was married eight years to the same man who had been a Marine in the military service and was a planer in a factory in civilian life. He had a ninth grade education. "G" had custody of three children; one female, age 3 years, and two males, ages six and nine years. This single parent family of four had lived on less than \$4,000 a year for the past three years. Because she was on welfare, she also baby-sat to earn a little extra income. She was born in Inglewood, California, and had one older brother. Her parents were still married.

"G's" Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis Profile indicated the following percentiles: Nervous, 98; Depressive, 89; Active-Social, 4; Expressive-Responsive, 8; Sympathetic, 42; Subjective, 81; Dominant, 36; Hostile, 90; Self-disciplined, 15. She seemed to indicate anxiety and withdrawal tendencies.

Her responses to the Questionnaire indicated that she was

positive regarding her past, mildly positive regarding her current situation, and mildly negative regarding her future. She indicated her mood to be somewhat sad, and that she had no degree of guilt, but had a mild suicide preoccupation.

She indicated that she kept distress within manageable limits by contact with friends and by taking Valium. By being willing to help others without being asked, she was able to maintain a sense of personal worth. Reaching out was her way of restoring relationships with significant other people.

"Yes" was the answer to questions on seeking advance information, using friendships to seek information, pooling of information and coping skills, seeking support during times of crisis, and using alternative paths to personal fulfillment. She responded "no" to questions about seeking information about new roles, and about future difficulties.

Although she did not try to project a clear self-image as an effective doer, she nonetheless felt that she was an effective doer simply by being herself. She combined new combinations of skills, and used other peers as resource persons. Her long-term purpose is remarriage, but does not feel that it will happen. Interpersonal support was important to her. She allowed some self-pity, but self-manipulated her own feelings to maintain her own self-worth.

Coping with her own father's drinking problems, during an earlier stage in her life, gave her some coping skills which she was able to use in a more recent time of her life. Being held or cuddled

gave her strength. Her children would hug her, but these were not quite enough. There was a supportive function in shared experiences in her opinion. She said the only useful part of worry was that it made her feel better when she stopped. Fantasy of future behavior was useful to her. She did not think that a past success helped to make the next problem easier to cope with, especially in the area of remarriage.

Loneliness, a lack of a father for her children, and a lack of money were the hardest things she had to cope with. Her most-used method of coping was with a telephone call to a friend and to take a Valium. Her worst way of coping was to turn away from her children; to tell them to leave her alone. She also indicated that she did not stand up enough for her self in the fear of losing her boyfriend. She felt happiness and accomplishment when she was coping. Suicidal were her feelings when she was not coping. The group helped her to cope by knowing that they would help in various ways and by knowing that she was not alone.

"G" "very often" sought additional information. She talked with others about her problems "all the time," and "very often" sought the humorous aspects of a situation. "Sometimes" she tried not to worry about problems, and "sometimes" she tried to take her mind off a problem by getting involved in other activities. "Very often" she took positive action based on her understanding of the problem. She "very often" was prepared to expect the worst, and "never" made alternate plans for handling a situation. "Very often" she drew upon past

experiences to cope, and "very often" used pills to reduce tension.

Case Study of the "Average" Single Parent Studied

Answers to the Biographical Profile revealed that the "average" of the seven women was white, female, 37 years old, 15 years of education, Protestant, 23 years old when first married, and remained married to the same man for 12 years. This "average" person had been divorced for three years from a professional husband who had 16 years of education. She had custody of one boy, age 6, and one girl, age 10. This family of three lived on an income of \$8,000 to \$10,000 per year and had never been on welfare. She came from a family with one older brother and no sisters, and her parents were still married. (See Table I.)

The "average" response to the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis Profile (see Table II) revealed these percentiles: Nervous, 68; Depressive, 61; Active-Social, 53; Expressive-Responsive, 44; Sympathetic, 52; Subjective, 66; Dominant, 40; Hostile, 60; Self-disciplined, 39. This means that the "average" person studied fell into the "improvement desirable" profile five times: Nervous, Depressive, Expressive-Responsive, Subjective, and Hostile. The other four traits were "acceptable." None were "excellent."

The "average" answers to the Questionnaire indicated these results, using terms from the Questionnaire: feelings regarding her past, current situation, and future were all "mildly positive." Her mood was "somewhat happy," and degree of guilt was ranked as midway

TABLE I

BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE

The Group Members and the "Average" Group Member

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	AVE.
Age	40	36	34	37	42	43	29	37
Occupation	Teach	Sec	Teach	Sec	Sec	Nurse	none	
Education	17	15	16	14	14	16	12	15
Religion	P	C	P	P	P	P	P	P
Age, 1st married	23	23	22	23	24	25	19	23
Years married	13	10	7	12	16	16	8	12
Years divorced	4	3	4	2	2	2	3	3
Ex-spouse's occupation	Sales	Engr	Teach	Coll Prof	Engr	Hosp Admin	Constr	
Education ex-spouse	12	16	18	20	16	18	9	16
Children's ages								
Female	16	10,5	--	9	10,12	11,11,15	3	10
Male	13	8	8	--	--	17	9,6	6
Income	10-12	8-10	8-10	10-12	8-10	12-14	0-4	8-10
Ever on welfare	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Brothers	1	1	1	2	--	--	--	1
Sisters	--	--	--	2	--	--	1	0
Parents married	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

TABLE II

TAYLOR-JOHNSON TEMPERAMENT ANALYSIS PROFILE

The Group Members and the "Average" Group Member

Trait	Trait Opposite	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	Ave
Nervous	Composed	44	72	9	85	97	72	98	68
Depressive	Light-hearted	55	72	3	49	99	59	89	61
Active-Social	Quiet	77	98	45	40	40	66	4	53
Expressive-Responsive	Inhibited	53	80	33	80	14	42	8	44
Sympathetic	Indifferent	87	78	35	98	9	98	42	52
Subjective	Objective	17	72	27	92	99	72	81	66
Dominant	Submissive	77	77	91	47	16	14	36	40
Hostile	Tolerant	71	78	18	60	99	0	90	60
Self-disciplined	Impulsive	23	45	93	53	4	37	15	39

between "none" and "mild," as was her suicide preoccupation.

The "average" group member kept distress within manageable limits by talking to a friend, keeping busy, and taking Valium. She maintained a sense of personal worth by getting positive feedback from other people. To maintain relationships she talked to the persons involved.

The "average" group member said "yes" to all the questions, such as: sought advance information about a new situation, sought information about new roles, sought advance information for difficulties which may appear in the future, used friendships in seeking information, looked for intellectual stimulation through information discussion groups, pooled information and coping skills, sought support in times of crisis, and used alternative paths to personal fulfillment.

She tried to project a clear self-image as an effective doer, tried to mobilize new combinations of skills, and used other peers as resource persons and as support.

She said "yes," that coping skills acquired in a previous period of her life had helped her in a more recent period, that being held or cuddled somehow helped her to cope, and that there was a supportive function in shared experiences. She did not feel that there was usefulness in worry. She agreed that fantasy of future behavior was useful, and that past successes help one to succeed the next time.

The hardest thing she had to cope with was loneliness and the

feeling of being rejected. Her most used method of coping was to talk to someone. The worst way of coping was a mixture of feeling sorry, getting angry, and withdrawing. She felt good, happy, and confident when she was coping well. When she was not coping well, she felt depressed, afraid, suicidal, withdrawn, and self-hatred. The group helped her by being a place where she would not be alone, where she could be herself around other adults, and where she could learn more about herself.

The following strategies ("strategy" is used interchangeably with "style") are summarized on Table III by frequency of response. The "average" single parent indicated she was at a midpoint between "sometimes" and "very often" in "trying to find out more about a situation." "Very often" she "talked with others about a problem," and the "humorous aspects of a situation" were seen. "Don't worry about it," got a "never" rating. "Becoming involved in other activities in order to keep her mind off a problem" got a midpoint rating between "sometimes" and "very often." "Sometimes" this average member "took some positive concerted action on the basis of her present understanding of a situation." "Never" did this person try to "prepare herself to expect the worst." A midpoint between "never" and "sometimes" was reached on "making alternative plans for handling a situation." "Drawing on past experiences" reached a midpoint between "sometimes" and "very often." Less than "sometimes" did she "try to reduce tension by drinking, eating, smoking, exercising, or taking pills." The above strategies, or styles, are summarized by each single parent in Table III and rank ordered in Table IV.

TABLE III
USE OF STRATEGIES OR STYLES

Strategy ¹	Single Parent							Total	Rank
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G		
(1)	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	10	3
(2)	2	2	1	2	2	2	3	14	1
(3)	1	3	2	2	1	2	2	13	2
(4)	0	1	0	2	0	1	1	5	6
(5)	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	10	3
(6)	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	9	4
(7)	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	3	7
(8)	1	2	0	0	1	1	0	5	6
(9)	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	10	3
(10)	1	1	0	1	1	0	2	6	5
Total	9	16	7	13	10	13	17		
Rank	5	2	6	3	4	3	1		

Score	Frequency
0	"never"
1	"sometimes"
2	"very often"
3	"all the time"

¹See the Appendix for the last page of the Questionnaire

TABLE IV

RANK ORDERING OF THE STRATEGIES

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Strategy</u>
1	Talk with others about the problem (friend, relative, professional person. (2)
2	Try to see the humorous aspects of the situation. (3)
3	Try to find out more about the situation; seek additional information. (1)
3	Become involved in other activities in order to keep your mind off the problem. (5)
3	Draw upon past experiences; perhaps you've been in a similar situation before. (9)
4	Take some positive concerted action on the basis of your present understanding of the situation. (6)
5	Try to reduce the tension (drink, eat, smoke, exercise). (10)
6	Don't worry about it. Everything will probably work out fine. (4)
6	Make several alternate plans for handling the situation--after all you never know which might work. (8)
7	Be prepared to expect the worst. (7)

Rank Ordering of Strategies or Styles

The rank ordering of the strategies (see Table V) seemed to indicate four major groupings of strategies. The first grouping includes rank order 1 and 2. The second grouping includes rank order 3 and 4. The third grouping includes rank order 5 and 6. The fourth group has rank order 7. The natural breaks between these groupings were the way they were separated and grouped.

The first group includes rank order 1 and 2. The first ranked strategy, (2) "talk with others about the problem (friend, relative, professional person)," seemed to indicate the willingness of this group of single parents to verbalize their problem with someone either close to them, or with professional knowledge. The second ranked strategy, (3) "Try to see the humorous aspects of the situation," perhaps indicated the need for comedy relief during times of pressure. These two strategies comprised the first group and accounted for 31.7% of the coping.

The second group includes rank order 3 and 4. The third ranked strategy was a tie between strategies (1), (5), and (9). Strategy (1), "Try to find out more about the situation; seek additional information," seemed to indicate that this group of single parents had resources they could contact to gain more information on their individual problems. Strategy (5), "Become involved in other activities in order to help keep your mind off the problem," perhaps was an attempt at mental relief. Strategy (9), "Draw upon your past experiences; perhaps you've been in a similar situation before," could have been an attempt

TABLE V

FOUR MAJOR GROUPINGS OF STRATEGIES OR STYLES

Group	Rank	Strategy	Response Use Total	Percent	Group Percent Total
1	1	(2)	14	16.4	31.7
	2	(3)	13	15.3	
2	3	{ (1)	10	11.8	46.0
		{ (5)	10	11.8	
		{ (9)	10	11.8	
	4	(6)	9	10.6	
3	5	(10)	6	7.0	18.8
	6	{ (4)	5	5.9	
		{ (8)	5	5.9	
4	7	(7)	3	3.5	3.5
Total			85	100.0	100.0

Table V rank orders the ten strategies according to use in the second column. The first column "groups" the rank ordering according to the natural breaks in use from column four. These four groups are related only according to similar percent use and move from most used (group 1) to least used (group 4), and are a quick guide to which strategies are used the most and the least.

to use their own resources. The fourth ranked strategy, (6) "Take some positive concerted action on the basis of your present understanding of the situation," may have indicated the need to do something positive. These four strategies, (1), (5), (9), and (6) comprised the second group and accounted for 46.0% of the coping.

The third group includes rank order 5 and 6. The fifth ranked strategy, (10) "Try to reduce the tension (drink, eat, smoke, exercise)," perhaps indicated the need for immediate relief. The sixth ranked strategy was a tie between strategies (4) and (8). Strategy (4) "Don't worry about it. Everything will probably work out fine," could have been the attempt to take no action. Strategy (8) "Make several alternate plans for handling the situation; after all you never know which might work," may have indicated the need for more security. These three strategies comprised the third group and accounted for 18.8% of the coping.

The fourth group included only rank order 7. This last rank order was (7) "Be prepared to expect the worst," and was perhaps the most negative of all the strategies. This strategy comprised the fourth group and accounted for 3.5% of the coping.

Comparison with Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis Profile

The Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis Profile results were compared with the rank in total coping for each single parent (see Table VI). First, the T-J TAP percentiles were scored 1, 2, 3, or 4 according to where the percentiles occurred on the profile; Excellent,

TABLE VI

TAYLOR-JOHNSON TEMPERAMENT ANALYSIS PROFILE RESULTS

Trait		Single Parent						
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Nervous	Composed	2	3	1	4	4	3	4
Depressive	Light-hearted	3	3	1	3	4	3	4
Active-Social	Quiet	1	1	2	2	2	1	4
Expressive-Responsive	Inhibited	2	1	3	1	4	3	4
Sympathetic	Indifferent	1	1	3	1	4	1	3
Subjective	Objective	1	3	1	4	4	3	4
Dominant	Submissive	1	1	2	2	3	4	2
Hostile	Tolerant	3	4	1	3	4	1	4
Self-disciplined	Impulsive	3	2	2	2	4	3	4
Total		17	19	16	22	33	22	33
Rank		4	3	5	2	1	2	1

Acceptable, Improvement desirable, or Improvement urgent. These scores for each trait were then totaled for each person to obtain a guide for the relative need for improvement. These guides were then ranked.

These ranked guides were compared with the total strategies used by each single parent.

	Single Parent						
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Ranked relative need for improvement	4	3	5	2	1	2	1
Ranked Total strategies used	5	2	6	3	4	3	1

Single parent "G" seemed to need the most improvement and used the most total strategies. Single parent "C" needed the least improvement and used the least strategies. Single parent "A" needed the second least improvement and used the second least strategies. Single parents "D" and "F" were both in second place in need for improvement, and were both in third place in strategies used. However, single parent "E" was in a tie for first place for needed improvement, but was in fourth place for strategies used. Single parent "B" was third in need of improvement and second in strategies used. The above information is restructured as follows:

	Single Parent						
	G	D	F	B	E	A	C
Ranked relative need for improvement	1	2	2	3	1	4	5
Ranked Total strategies used	1	3	3	2	4	5	6

Summary

The rank ordering of the 10 strategies mixed the practical and the impractical ways of coping. The top ranked strategy was to talk to others, which seemed to be a practical way of coping. The second ranked strategy, to try to see the humor in the situation, did not seem as practical as the first, but did have an element of emotional release and comic relief involved. The three which tied for third place, seek additional information, become involved in other activities, and using past experiences seemed practical. The fourth ranked strategy, taking positive action, also seemed practical. Tension reduction was fifth, but could have been a practical means of coping, especially the exercising part. In sixth place was the impractical strategy, don't worry about it. However, tied for sixth place was the practical strategy, make alternate plans. In last place was the impractical and negative strategy, be prepared to expect the worst. Seventy-seven and seven-tenths percent of the coping was done by the first four ranks of strategies which mixed five practical and one impractical strategies.

This study also indicated that the single parent who used the

most total coping strategies, also ranked the highest in relative need for improvement. Conversely, the single parent who used the least coping strategies, also indicated the least relative need for improvement. The other single parents fell into a somewhat similar pattern between these two extremes.

What follows is a brief discussion of my impressions of how the three years in the growth group changed coping styles or adjustments of some single parents.

It seemed by the end of the group most of the single parents could act on their own observations and feelings, if they were not greatly overburdened with emotional problems. However, at the beginning of the group about half of the group took tranquilizers with a fair degree of regularity. These tranquil single parents would then talk with other persons in the group seeking help as best they could through the chemical veil. Later, near the end of the group, only one single parent was still on tranquilizers with any degree of regularity.

During the course of the three years certain single parents had motive states induced in them. Single parent "A" was deprived of a substantial income from the divorce. A motive state was induced in her to regain a certain style of living by completing her college degree and becoming certified to teach. Her degree of deprivation was in relation to her degree of motive to complete her goal requirements. She put in much effort for the degree, and then had to wait for a teaching job to open up in the district.

During the three years the single parents learned how to set

limits to demands. During the first few months after divorce many demands were placed on each of the single parents. Much effort was used in focusing in one or more areas to meet the demands. She had to set limits on things she could do. She could be the best mother she knew how, but could not be a father also. She could provide a quality home environment, but had to do it within limited financial resources. She had to learn that to get angry was necessary to function as a whole human, and that it was not going to harm the children. She had to learn to say "no" to many of her children's emotional and physical needs. She had a greatly reduced buying power. Some previous expenses such as dance lessons, piano lessons, orthodontia, or large allowances had to be curtailed if the income was to be used effectively. Outings stopped being a quick flurry of spending money, and became longer periods of less expensive fun. One aspect of this was that without the ex-spouse along, the family spent more unhurried time at one place and with far fewer arguments.

There are probably many reasons for a single parent to shift aspiration levels. They might want to hide, experiment, defend, or grow. Previous to becoming a single parent all of the women in the group wanted to be wives and mothers, but not full-time professional workers. "A" said her hardest problem in coping was to deal with the sense of failure involved with the divorce and rejection as a wife. Somehow she felt she had been a failure and had fallen short. Her intention had been to have a life-long marriage. Now, as a single parent, she was no longer content to stay at home, and she branched

out to teaching. She felt a degree of confidence return as she completed her college, her student teaching, and finally her placement as a teacher. Her shift in aspiration meant growth, risk, and a better life for her as a woman. She did not feel tied to her home and children. She had confidence and felt her inner self become more alive.

"B" was able to change her working environment as a result of the support of the group. She had a "pass" made at her in the rest room at work by her male boss. She felt compelled to change jobs, but did not want to risk being out of work or of offending the boss. Using support and insight from the group she not only quit this job, but also tried two other jobs before deciding on one that had more responsibility and pay. She felt her integrity was of more importance, and with the support of the group decided to risk.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

This conclusion will summarize briefly the study and draw brief conclusions, construct a theology of effective coping, tell of the implications for single parents, and list some resources for the development of a single parents' growth group.

ANALYSIS OF THE COPING STYLES

Analysis of the coping strategies have indicated four major groups (see Table V). The four groups are used as a means of quick referral and tabulation.

In the *first group* are, ranked first and second in use, strategies (2) and (3). These two strategies were close in percent of use, 16.4% and 15.3%, respectively, and together accounted for 31.7% of the total.

The first ranked strategy was (2), "Talk with others about the problem (friend, relative, professional person)." One conclusion is that there was a strong need for someone else to talk to about their needs; someone who would respond to their problems. An essential part of coping for this group of single parents was the need to be heard by significant other people in ways that would help the singles. Apparently this coping style was practical and usable and gave them some satisfaction. It was not just information gathering, as (1) which was ranked at third place. Some of the emotional needs of the single

parents in this group were apparently being met. These single parents called friends from within the group for help. They called me, a professional person, as a result of the group. They called relatives, and outside the group friends. This special interest growth group was developed because their felt needs were heard by a local church.

The second ranked strategy from the findings indicated that this group of single parents (3) "try to see the humorous aspects of the situation." One conclusion is that these single parents seem to need the comedy relief from emotional pressure. They needed to see the humor in some grim personal problems. Apparently they needed to have a reprieve from their emotional battering. The ability to sit back and laugh at one's self seemed to be a method of keeping life in perspective.

In the *second group* are four strategies, and when they are added to the first two strategies they account for 77.7% of the coping. Three of the four strategies tied for third place in ranked order. These three were strategies (1), "Try to find out more about the situation; seek additional information," (5) "Become involved in other activities in order to keep your mind off the problem," and (9) "Draw upon past experiences; perhaps you've been in a similar situation before." One conclusion is that strategy (1) sought out the information content. Strategy (5) was a way of mental relief, much like comedy relief. Strategy (9) was the practical application of experience. All three seemed to be practical and useful tools of coping. These three indicate the need for the single parent to continue talking and thinking, but includes the need to have mental relief with other projects.

The fourth strategy in the second group was (6) "Take some positive concerted action on the basis of your present understanding of the situation." A conclusion is that this strategy implied the necessity of action based on a grasp of the situation. Lacking is the need to talk or to have emotional relief. This is a practical way of coping, but no inner emotional needs are met.

So far the findings have covered almost 80% of the coping done by these single parents. My conclusion at this point is that for the most part the coping has been practical and necessary to mental well-being. These have been relatively positive coping strategies.

The *third group* accounted for 18.8% of the coping and consisted of strategies (10) "Try to reduce the tension (drink, eat, smoke, exercise)"; (4) "Don't worry about it. Everything will probably work out fine"; (8) "Make several alternate plans for handling the situation--after all you never know which might work." These three strategies, I have concluded, seem to be more impractical for this group, in comparison with the previous six just covered, even though two of these three seem to be practical in my opinion. Strategy (10) seems a practical way of dealing with tension, especially the exercise part. However, most of the single parents said they did not have the time to exercise, and that smoking was not their habit, and drinking and eating were harmful (weight gain). Strategy (4) did not work for them because they *did* worry, and not much had turned out fine. Strategy (8) did not work for the single parents, because they felt they had a hard time making one plan--much less alternate plans for a situation.

The *fourth group* had only one strategy, (7) "Be prepared to expect the worst," and accounted for 3.5% of the coping. I have concluded that this was the most negative of all ten strategies. It seems to be an emotional defense which was not problem-solving oriented. There was no reaching out to others for help and no comedy relief involved.

A THEOLOGY OF EFFECTIVE COPING

Theological Observations

The following observations are based on my role as a pastor with one group of single parents over a three-year period involved in personal Christian growth. At one time or another, each of the single parents shared with me their feelings including joy, faith, hope and despair. In addition to the individual counseling each person met in a bi-weekly growth group over the same period of three years. These meetings resulted in other interchanges of feelings. It was from these two types of personal interchanges that I write on the concept of "love and neighbor." The perspectives apply only to this one small group of single parents.

Many attempts to formulate a theology of coping based on the styles of these single parents always brought me back to the concept of "love and neighbor." Their most used method of coping was to talk with others about their problems. Who did they talk to? A friend, relative, or professional person; a neighbor. Their needs were met by the person who would respond to their needs. What were their needs?

They needed someone to help them; someone to be with them in their hour of crisis; someone who would indicate that they would share their loneliness; someone to talk to, to drain off emotions with; someone to give them new direction; someone to help them cope. "Love and neighbor" are suitably expressed in Luke 10:25-37.

Exegetical Observations on Luke 10:25-37

Limits. The RSV places the unit in two paragraphs with breaks at v. 25-28, and 29-37. The NEB has a double white space paragraph break preceding v. 25 and keeps the unit within one paragraph which ends at v. 37. Furnish places the complete sequence of thought in v. 25-37.¹ The literary units seem to be well defined with the thoughts taken up in turn and dealt with in a progression of thinking. The ending seems to be clear and ends the unit. This is an appropriate unit for exegesis within the whole of chapter 10. Verses 25-37 deal with the theme "love and neighbor" and has a clear, complete movement of thought.

Structure. The unit has two major sections: the lawyer's first question, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" and Jesus' response (v. 25-28), and his second question, "And who is my neighbor?" and the response from Jesus (29-37). Verse 25 introduces the lawyer and his question on eternal life. In verse 26 Jesus

¹Victor Paul Furnish, *The Love Command in the New Testament* (Nashville: Parthenon Press, 1972), p. 37.

counters with a question about the law. Continuing the narrative in verse 27 the lawyer quotes parts of Deuteronomy and Leviticus on love and neighbor. Jesus responds that the man is on the right path and adds the imperative. Then, in verse 29, the lawyer asks his second question about who is neighbor. Jesus responds with a story of the Good Samaritan in verses 30-35, and asks a question of the lawyer based on the story in verse 36. The lawyer makes his response of definition of neighbor to which Jesus adds his imperative in verse 37.

Language. The differences between RSV and NEB seem to be choices of options in English and represent no difficulties with the Greek text. However, in verse 29 NEB's "vindicate" and RSV's "justify" can mislead. In ordinary usage "vindicate" is to clear from an accusation or suspicion, while "justify" is to be just or right or warranted. In verse 37 RSV uses "mercy" while NEB uses "kindness."

The question "who is my neighbor?" is poised only once in the New Testament, in Luke 10:29.² Bauer defines πλησύν as "(1) near, close by, the neighbor. (2) the one who is near, close by, the fellowman."³ "Neighbor" in the Old Testament means "a fellow member of the covenant" who had assumed "moral obligations and the guarantee of certain rights for each member." In the New Testament "Jesus would have followers recognize their neighbors as those in need of services,

²James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1890), p. 712.

³Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 678.

as individuals to whom assistance would be helpful and to whom it therefore should be offered." The man in need was not the neighbor, rather the man who had compassion was the neighbor as in the Good Samaritan story. "Jesus extends the term 'neighbor' until it is essentially coextensive with 'mankind.'" ⁴

In the Old Testament neighbor "is used most frequently in reference to the Israelite's responsibility to a fellow Israelite." Contact with a non-Israelite was rare. "A man was responsible for his neighbor's well being." Then in the New Testament "the concept 'neighbor' grows in scope to include all mankind." "Man is a neighbor to another when he shows mercy to the other. Neighborliness means showing unlimited mercy to anyone in need." ⁵

Setting in life. This is a controversy dialogue which has its starting place with the question in verse 25. ⁶ The question is responded to with a counter-question, verse 26, as was typical of Rabbinic tradition, especially when it dealt with questions of law, as this one. ⁷ Controversy dialogue frequently had Scriptural quotations as in verse 27. ⁸ The controversy dialogue occurred in "the apologetic

⁴H. F. Beck, *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), III, 535.

⁵J. Sherrell Hendricks, *The Christian Word Book* (Nashville: Methodist Publishing House, 1968), p. 211.

⁶Rudolf Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 39.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 45.

and polemic of the Palestinian Church."⁹ It was the way the Church had to express its "dominical sayings, its views, and its fundamental beliefs."¹⁰

The preceding controversy dialogue is used as a frame for the exemplary story which follows in verses 30-37.¹¹ The story of the Good Samaritan is an exemplary story for it offers an example or a model "of right behavior."¹²

Setting in literature. The book as a whole is presented as "an orderly account" for Theophilus of "things which you have been informed" (1:3-4). It is Luke who sets forth here the words and works of Jesus. In this unit of study Luke expresses some of his distinctive characteristics; universalism, an interest in social relationships, a deep concern for Samaritans, and an emphasis on the severity of the demands of Jesus.¹³ At least one author has suggested that the unit of study has been artificially set within the Lucan setting. "The so-called 'travel narrative' (9:51-19:27) is, as the recent works on it have shown, a creation of Luke, who inserted didactical material of various origin into the framework of a journey to Jerusalem (a framework not really carried out). In this 'central section' there is not just a primitive tradition taken over by Luke, but a composition

⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 51.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 61.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 178, footnote 1.

¹³Vincent Taylor, "Luke," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), III, p. 180.

of the evangelist, who has widened the situation advanced in Mark 10:1 for the insertion of his disparate material."¹⁴ Jeremias, also, acknowledges that the parables of Jesus had an original historical setting, and that they "lived" in the primitive Church which collected and arranged them, often creating "a setting for them."¹⁵ According to Bultmann verses 30-37 have "been artificially blended into its context by Luke."¹⁶ He says that the question in verse 36, "Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among robbers?" and the answer in verse 37, "He said, 'The one who showed mercy on him.' And Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise,'" were given to Luke and that verse 36 was "artificially prepared for it."¹⁷ Luke had to prepare his question so that the answer would make the attacked man the neighbor. Then the imperative was added. Bultmann goes on to say that controversy dialogues "developed in the tradition when independent sayings were joined to an already existing situation."¹⁸

Setting in history. Verses 25-37 are between a lawyer and Jesus. The place and the time are not specifically told, nor do we

¹⁴Werner G. Kummel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1965), p. 93.

¹⁵Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), p. 23.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 178.

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 61.

know the audience. It occurs in the text after the return of the seventy (10:17), and after Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem (9:52). It took place sometime during his journey to Jerusalem through Samaria (9:52-53).

Intention. What does Jesus teach in this specific unit? What interpretation of love and neighbor is offered as an illumination of reality and a guide for living? How does this unit help lead one to faith?

First, Jesus coordinates two Old Testament passages with the intention of telling all that man has to do in order to find eternal life: respond with love for God that is actualized in love, which knows no limits, for one's neighbor. It is a demand for obedience which ends with "Do this." Jesus is teaching that God would rather have mercy and loving kindness than cult sacrifice (Matt. 9:13). Jesus makes new the claim made in Deuteronomy that God has sole claim to man's devotion. There was nothing new in the basic message; it was already in the Scriptures. The lawyer knew the answer to his own question, he had next to "do it" in order to live. We are confronted with the laws from the Old Testament repeated in the New Testament and are faced with the question, "do we keep them?" What part does our response play in the divine command to us? Where is our obedience? What gets in the way of eternal life?

Second, Jesus assesses the lawyer's insight and develops an example of neighbor which the lawyer himself will later have to answer correctly. The lawyer, like us, wants to know what to do in a given

situation. The answer is broad and universal love for anyone needing help. The message for those who think they know the law is that they have yet to carry out the law. Man's interests and the divine demand can be met, but the responsibility is placed on man; he will ultimately answer for his own actions. A man is judged by his actions to his neighbor; will he obtain eternal life? The answer comes back at us twice in these verses, a resounding "Yes!" if we "Do likewise!" Clear action, not a clear definition is the key.

Third, Luke is stressing what the early Church wanted to be said about itself. The message of eternal life no longer belongs just to the Jews; it is now universally open to all of mankind, including Gentiles and Samaritans. Even those who have been social rejects can fulfill the law better than those within the law. Love of God, by Luke's definition, went along side a deep concern for social relationships. Eternal life depended on both in mutual harmony. Jesus' demands are severe, but man has the final say; he can accept or reject neighbor and God.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SINGLE PARENTS

Each of the single parents was, at different times, both the person who needed a neighbor, and the neighbor who would respond. Each reached out for help, and each helped. They were each the helpless and the helper. Because this was a small, intimate community, each found themselves occasionally receiving help, and then minutes later, helping someone else. One single parent would call on a neighbor,

be heard and helped, and then, minutes later, be called to help someone else. Their sense of neighbor, however, was not entirely confined to the group members. They reached out to others and others were neighbor to them.¹⁹

The single parents in this study group did not have to ask who is my neighbor? or who needs my help? They knew who their neighbor was from their own sense of shared pain. Their neighbor was anyone who needed their help. Occasionally, one single parent might not have "liked" another single parent, but would respond, as a neighbor, because she was concerned about her as a human who needed help. Sometimes better interpersonal relationships developed as a result of shared care.

Because of their interaction with each other, such as giving food, sharing clothes, and mutual crisis help, they had the feeling they were responsible for each other. There was a knowledge of mutual dependence that went beyond mere survival. They were tied into each other's lives and felt the freedom to respond to each other's needs.

In helping and being helped, a single parent often helped to build herself. When a single parent went outside her own needs to help another, personal growth was enhanced. Helping a neighbor and helping oneself went together. It went beyond being friendly in a "neighborly" fashion to people in the block or in the apartment building. By going beyond what was naturally expected from a courteous

¹⁹See "Resources for the Development of a Single Parents Growth Group," pp. 63ff.

person, the neighbor was able to have a new perspective on her own life. She was able to reclaim a lost part of her life. Because she was, at least in part, a social outcast, she was able, through being a neighbor, to claim her rightful position as an heir of eternal life.

Redemption, buying back, or reclaiming occurred through love and concern for neighbor. Love of self and of God was often at a low point when the new single parent first joined the group. Regaining a love of self and of God went hand-in-hand. As the member grew in the group life of love and neighbor, redemption occurred. For some of the single parents, their own physical lives were redeemed through the failure of their attempted suicide, because one of the other members felt they were neighbor and helped during the suicidal crisis. The helper was left with the knowledge of the fragility of human life. In the beginning of the group most of the single parents did not have a vital and sustaining relationship with God. All had some distant relationship with a church. However, because of the regaining of their own selfhood they were much more open to the message of redemption from God.

Käsemann says "the Church can only exist as the community of Christ in so far as grace repeatedly lays hold on us and re-creates us as instruments of his service; and that we must leave him to care for the continuity of the Church, who alone is able to ensure the continuance of grace."²⁰ God provides for the next generation of the church

²⁰Ernst Käsemann, "Ministry and Community in the New Testament," in his *Essays on New Testament Themes* (Naperville: Allenson, 1964)p.134.

through us, even though we don't deserve his care. We are re-created as instruments of his to be in service to our neighbor and to love him.

It was through love that these single parents were able to partly take down the malfunctioning barriers to life which they had erected. They all felt mistakes had been made, that they were social outcasts, and that they were less of a person because of them. It was love that encouraged them to take down the barriers and to become more of a re-claimed people. The risk was high, but the love support was equal to the demands.

For this specific group of single parents this type of love was best expressed with the Greek "agape." First, the group members responded to God's love to them by finding a better idea of what it meant to live. They had been living as malfunctioning, defensive, hostile single parents. Through agape they found a better way of living and loving. A second part of agape was that the single parent had to give of herself in order to build the quality of her own life. There was no "cheap agape" in the group. All had to work toward quality agape. Not all of the members achieved agape to the same degree as others did, or even at the same rate. In order to achieve agape they had to take part in the personal giving. Sometimes they failed, but were always supported by the group.

A third part of agape was that individual members did not try to gain personal worth by tearing down another person. They had all been through the tearing down of their previous lives and marriages,

and from that did not feel that tearing down another person helped to build love. They tried to be enhancers of life in general, and of each other in particular. Of course personal belittlement occurred with some regularity among some of the single parents. However, the tearing down of another group member was rare.

These single parents had a strong feeling of mutual pain. They were in sympathy with each other; they could touch the pain in another because they could feel similar pain in themselves. Repeatedly, the ability and willingness to help a neighbor was demonstrated, lives were reclaimed, and agape grew as a standard of life.

Bultmann makes a statement which is appropriate for this group of single parents. "The 'bearing' of 'one another's burdens' which Paul terms the fulfilling of this 'law,' is nothing else than a manifestation of being 'servants of one another through love.'"²¹ The bearing of burdens was done as neighbor among the single parents. Among these people those who could function in the bearing of each other's burdens best were those who were free from themselves; those whose old life had died and who now lived for Christ. The servant concept was expressed in action by those single parents who knew they were not standing alone, or as a slave, but were exercising freedom from all powers of other people to be neighbor. They were following the demand "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." A key factor for the functioning single parent was that they love themselves. Often the

²¹Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), p. 344.

opposite was true; self-hate was high until it was dealt with, and the person supported through a time of healing. There was a direct balance between self-love and love of neighbor. Love and neighbor was the desired goal. They were striving toward this goal, especially in wider areas of their daily lives. It was within the group itself that this life style was the best expressed. Some of the group members tended to retain some of their protective barriers against the hostile, outside world. However, it was the successes within the group that gave them the strength to risk trying to be neighbor to others outside the group. The acceptance within the group made redemption more recognizable and forgiveness more possible. God was at work in their lives.

When forgiveness became a part of their life they were more open to the potential of redemption. When a single parent experienced forgiveness she was able to reclaim part of herself; that part twisted by self-hate and pity. After seeing and feeling the forgiveness she was better able to forgive others, and to help them reclaim part of themselves. The nonspecificness of love of neighbor "makes the individual immediately responsible to God."²² It was the utter importance of the moment that demanded a higher responsibility than one's self. God uses human forgiveness to partly show how much greater His own forgiveness is by comparison, and how much more of a person's life could yet be reclaimed when one loves God and neighbor with all they have.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 19.

RESOURCES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SINGLE
PARENTS' GROWTH GROUP

Among the following pages are a statement from the United Methodist Church on single parents, some basic guidelines for counseling setting up the initial group, and a guide of ethics for facilitators. These are intended to be resource material to establish a growth group for single parents. The resource material is based on my experience with this group of single parents over a period of three years.

In my opinion, there is a close relationship between the statement which follows from the United Methodist Church, and the conclusions at which I have arrived from this study. I have found that single parents constitute a large portion of our population who need the Church and that special local church programs are seldom constructed specifically to meet their needs. The statement from the United Methodist Church helps support this conclusion, and the implications for ministry to single parents are clearly listed.

Certain basic counseling guidelines and skills are crucial to developing a special program to meet the needs of single parents. Those listed are not exhaustive, but are some of the basic skills that I found to be important. Another counselor meeting with a different group might have to add other unique skills to this list. These worked for me. These basic counseling skills include: establishing the initial contact with the group to give it direction and integrity, and helping each group member to be committed to the purpose and goals of the group set up in the contract. Furthermore, it is essential

that the facilitator give serious study to ethical guidelines, either as suggested in this study or some other systematic approach. A firm ethical base will give support to the integrity and well-being of the group, will be a resource if sensitive feelings are discussed in the group, and will act as a partial buffer to "outside" critics of the group. Again, these guidelines helped me during my three years with a single parents' growth group.

In 1969, the United Methodist Church published a resolution on the plight of one-parent families in the church.

Methodist Church Statement

There is an increasing number of families today in which one parent carries the responsibility for rearing the children. Whether this is the result of divorce, death, desertion, or temporary absence of one parent because of illness, imprisonment, business, or military service, the parent alone may find the role a very difficult and lonely one.

The remaining parent and children are still a family and deserve to be so regarded by the church. Parents who are alone need the church in providing an emotionally healthy environment, including father or mother models for their children. They need support and association with two parent families if their children are to grow up in the Christian understanding of marriage and family life at its best. The church is also concerned for the estranged parent to help him realize a full life of his own and creative ways of relating to his children.

Local churches, districts, and conferences (sometimes in cooperation with churches of other faiths and community agencies) are encouraged to develop programs that involve these parents and their children in both the ongoing activities and fellowship of the church as well as in special need-oriented groups.²³

²³*The Book of Resolution of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: Methodist Publishing House, 1969), pp. 94-95.

This segment saw the difficult and lonely role the single parent has in parental responsibility, and took the stand that the one parent family was "still a family and deserved to be so regarded by the church." It saw the need for one parent families to be in relationship with other two parent families for support and association. This segment ends by encouraging local churches to meet some of the needs of one parent families with special programs. The concern of these special programs would be to provide "an emotionally healthy environment."

This seems to be a statement of affirmation on the one hand, and on the other hand the call for action to help minister to this one special type human condition. The implication seemed to me to be that single parents have not had the attention their numbers, if not their condition, deserve. If these are neglected families, they would probably be ignored families also. In the six United Methodist churches I have been associated with in my ministry not one ever had any type of special program to meet the needs of single parents, until I began the one reported on here.

Basic Guidelines for Counseling Individually and in a Group

As a basic approach to counseling single parents the following guidelines were helpful to this leader. They are by no means exhaustive. The more counseling training, especially CPE, a person has the better he or she will be able to deal with a single parent in counseling or in a group.

1. Try to truly listen to the person talk. Listen and observe nonverbal communication.
2. Consider all persons capable of change. Do not accept 'I am as I am' statements.
3. Notice the concept of blame. Is it directed towards self or others? Point it out as it occurs and discuss the consequences of this behavior.
4. Do not give advice--do not present the pat solution to others. Allow persons to become responsible for their own lives.
5. Clarify. Clarify. Clarify. Do not create dependency on yourself by assuming their responsibility. They solve, you clarify.
6. Try not to take sides. Each spouse has contributed to the marriage breakup. The single parent is a responsible person capable of change.
7. Don't dwell on the historical reasons for the present problem. Focus on what is happening here and now to maintain the mal-function. Permit the single parents to explore what could be done to change it.
8. Support. Support. Support the constructive coping of the people. Stress that failure is part of life and must be dealt with to function as a whole person.

Special Counseling Skills

One of the special skills needed by a leader of a single parent's group is a very good grasp of crisis counseling, especially dealing with suicide. One of the common traits of most of the parents in this group was a tendency toward temporary feelings of suicide. During the three years the group met all of the persons had, at one time or another, very strong suicide feelings. As time progressed the parents were trained to do suicide counseling with each other. The result was that the leader was freed to spend more time on other areas,

and that the single parents were able to do significant work with each other. The roles were often reversed, with the parent who had helped during one week, later needing help, often from the very parent who had helped her previously. The single parents were very skillful at suicide counseling and this one fact lent a great deal of inner integrity to the group as a whole. The parents were helped and also gained much needed ego strength from doing the counseling. The basic training consisted of explaining the A B C's of suicide counseling, and then sharing in the group some of the calls from the group and how it had helped. ("A" is Achieve contact. "B" is Boil it down. "C" is help in Coping.)²⁴ The parents were able to spend much time in listening to the hurts drain off.

Some potential leaders may feel that suicide is a sensitive topic and should not be brought up in the group. From what I have experienced, and from what the group has responded back with, I would suggest that nothing could be further from the truth. The parents needed a place where their strong feelings of self-destruction could be shared and ventilated. When the leader responds with acceptance and support and nonjudgment the guilt feelings of suicide thoughts are better dealt with, and the coping process can move in stronger.

Some of the parents felt that the suicide feelings would increase with an increased interest in women's liberation. The increased pressures of drive and recognition have opened more possibilities for failure. They are facing crises once restricted to men,

²⁴From Warren Jones, a Pasadena, California psychiatrist.

things like loss of self-esteem by not "making it" on the job, or by being fired. The single parents have enough of these feelings resulting from a divorce alone.

This group existed in Orange County which had the highest ratio of "divorces to marriages than almost any other area--more than Los Angeles County, more than the state of California and more than twice as many as the nation as a whole."²⁵ Orange County is one of the state's more affluent areas, also.²⁵ This article points out that the "easy life" is not so easy to live psychologically.

Initial Contract

When the group first began to meet we established a group contract. After much discussion we arrived at the following questions to be answered:

1. How much time is available? When? Duration?
2. Where is the meeting to take place?
3. Is there a feeling of rapport?
4. What are the limits of capabilities of the leader?
5. What is the 'payoff' for me?
6. What should be the basic relationship between people in the group?
7. How much am I willing to risk?

The initial contract was well understood by those persons present. From time-to-time the contract was revised in light of growth or needs. We met at first once a week for two hours in a church room. This was later changed to once every two weeks for four or five hours

²⁵"Divorce Boom: Sign of County's Changing Image," *Los Angeles Times* (August 31, 1972), part IV, p. 1.

in one of the single parent's homes. We found that the home setting did much to foster a feeling of relaxation and openness. Meeting once a week was too much time, too often. They wanted to meet less often, but for longer periods of time. They felt they had just gotten "into" something when it was time to go. It was at this time, of the initial contract, that I discussed some of my background and training, how I felt about single parents, why the church was interested in them, and how much I could risk.

Individual Commitment

It was imperative that each single parent make a strong pledge to attend the meetings and to take part in them. As a means of indicating to new persons to the group how the others in the group felt about the group we arrived at the following "rules." These were the only guides we ever had. They were used as a guide to indicate the intention and purpose of the group.

As a single parent wanting to help others I pledge the following as a minimum commitment to this group:

1. To keep what is said in the group in strict confidence.
2. To make every effort to attend every meeting.
3. Not to physically harm anyone.
4. To take an active part in every meeting.
5. To work toward 'self-help' by involvement.
6. To tell the group of any intention of quitting.
7. To remember that our ultimate goal is coping with life as a single parent by becoming more of a whole person and less of a fractured person.
8. To share changes in your life as a result of this group with your single parent friends.

As can be seen from this list, attendance was stressed. This helped to break the stay at home-feel sorry cycle. Getting dressed

and going out to talk to another adult seemed to be of importance. The confidence-keeping was imperative in view of some of the topics discussed. Confidence allowed for others to talk about risky topics. The group felt a strong need to minister to other single parents worse off than they were. They shared the change in their lives with others who might want to come to the group.

We did discover that if the group was larger than seven or eight at a meeting, the group process was greatly reduced. Some persons felt much more open, when the group was within this range. When the overly large group was present, not everyone could be heard, or have a chance to talk. The total possible number of individual interchanges were too great to deal with effectively for the leader. In order for the group to meet with eight at a meeting, the total population had to be greater than eight. Because of a small turn-over each year, we felt that the total population had to be around fifteen persons. Things like sick children, fatigue, no baby sitters, lack of time, and a "bad" day were some of the excuses used by some of the people in the group. About 80% of the people attended every meeting for a year or more. The other 20% were either a new visitor, or one of the less motivated persons. Less motivation meant that they missed at least two meetings a month. They were at a loss in the meeting to know what had taken place last time and what "homework" had been assigned. Homework was suggestions from the group to a person for better coping.

Categories of Eight Feelings

Winch locates eight feelings (see Table VII) which a remaining person might have as a result of the consequence of the circumstances of the departure. The feeling most often expressed in the study group was that of "feelings of having been rejected; hostility." This meant that the remaining single parent did not wish the spouse to leave, but the spouse wanted to leave, and that the single parent did not feel responsible for the other's departure. This seemed to be an accurate table for a quick referral. It could be used as a beginning place for further probing, or could be used as a discussion starter.

The feelings of having been rejected combined with hostility are a troublesome combination to deal with for the leader. I have found it most useful to try to separate these two and to deal with them one at a time. The single parents are most willing to admit the feelings of rejection. This was most often dealt with by support and acceptance. Some of the parents tried to ignore it, but when the others in the group indicated how rejected they had felt and how that feeling had interfered with their lives, then the others would slowly admit the possibility of it in them. Dealing with the hostility was more of a problem. Some of them vehemently deny any hostility, much to the amusement of the others in the group. Apparently, it was more acceptable to have been rejected than to be hostile about it.

One way of approaching the feelings of hostility was through guided fantasy using a group debriefing afterward. When the parents found that others in the group had hostile feelings they were a little

TABLE VII
EIGHT FEELINGS

Hypotheses about the Remaining Person's Emotional Reaction to the Others Departure as a Consequence of the Circumstances of the Departure.²⁶

		DID THE REMAINING PERSON WISH DEPARTED TO LEAVE?			
		YES		NO	
		Did departed wish to leave?		Did departed wish to leave?	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
Does Remaining Person Feel Responsible for Other's Departure?	Yes	Feelings of accomplishment and relief, mixed perhaps with guilt.	Maximum guilt mixed perhaps with relief.	Feelings of martyrdom.	Feelings of responsibility for a tragic mistake.
	No	Relief.	Guilt, mixed perhaps with relief.	Feelings of having been rejected; hostility.	Tragedy.

²⁶Robert F. Winch, *The Modern Family* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1971), p. 617.

better able to accept that fact in themselves.

Another approach was to get in touch with a feeling within the body that was tense, and deal with it in a guided relaxation experience. Often the group would respond with massage and an over-the-head lift and rocking experience. This would sometimes cause the person to begin crying as they relaxed and the feelings seemed to come pouring out of them.

A third method used was to gestalt a dream or special remembered symbol. In becoming the object or symbol the threat or hostile feelings were sometimes better understood. Often it took several gestalt experiences to come in contact with the most important one. This method was sometimes used in conjunction with a feeling within the body, i.e., "There is an egg-shaped pain right here"--indicating the middle of the upper chest.

Some of the most fruitful experiences dealt with the single parent being both herself and another person in a role play. Mothers, employers, ex-spouses, fathers, and children were among the most played. In doing this, parents could say some things that they had wished they had said. It also gave them the chance to see why another person might have responded the way they did.

Still another way, was to examine the many ways that a single parent might be hostile, and why. By using the head trip once in a while, it gave the emotions a rest and also offered the chance for a personal experience to surface without a great deal of personal connection with it.

Ethics of Facilitators

Because of the nature of lonely persons, some points should be stated about the ethics of the facilitator. This whole area was one of the most-asked questions. People would ask my wife, "How on earth could you allow your husband to be around all those single women?" In one way or another, other ministers would allude to this same general area. There is no denying the fact that the potential for sexual acting-out was present. If the facilitator does not have a good concept of himself and a good marriage, he may be in for some rough times.

If the leader indicates by actions that he has set limits, the group members will be able to pick them up without any trouble. Most of the single parents I encountered did not want to risk their counseling by becoming involved in sex. Most seemed to express the feeling that they would not try to harm an existing marriage, because they knew how it felt. A professional concern about the well-being of the hurting person demands that the counselor not add to their problems. When the issue is clear on both sides much help can take place. It is important that subtle and hidden messages do not take place, in spite of verbal denials. The leader is often the most different person in the group. Usually leaders are married, and often male. They are given special assignments as leader: teacher, guide, counselor, friend. The leader is always part of the group, but never a group member. Strong, firm, and consistent leadership skills are very necessary. The leader should have previous group experience as a member under the skilled leadership of a trained counselor. He must have had a chance to deal

with some of his own problems, before he can effectively deal with other people's problems.

One article lists some of the other dangers to avoid when leading a group.²⁷ Some of these included the following: "inappropriate self-disclosure, scapegoating, tyrannizing by the group, inappropriate reassurance, provocative behavior, tyrannizing by the leader, favoritism by the leader, and forced confession (psychological rape)." In this article the author lists nine principles in order of importance, with several depending on the first. It is not intended to be exhaustive. "Other" as used by the author is a member of the group and is spelled with a capital O.

1. The facilitator acknowledges and encourages informed self-determination as the highest value.

In following this principle, the facilitator will at times endorse, protect, and value a member's choice to remain silent; to decline another's urging toward action; to deviate from the position of the majority; to remain an observer.

2. The facilitator values highly the interminable struggle to know himself and to know the Other.

In the continuous search into himself, the facilitator engages in such disciplines as meditation, centering, psychotherapy, or supervision. He recognizes that what he has not discerned in himself he has difficulty seeing in the Other. (The Other, of course, can report self-matters, and thus enlarge the vision of the facilitator.)

The facilitator sustains his training and consciousness-expansion through self-review, or review and discussion with consultants and colleagues, and with reading.

²⁷Louis Paul, "Some Ethical Principles for Facilitators," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, XIII:1 (Winter 1973), 43.

3. The facilitator has a vision of each person transcending himself, and he assists the Other to risk this.

Man is the only creature who can transcend and surpass himself--each as a person, mankind as a species. It is imminent in man to transcend.

Transcendence is the price of self-consciousness; it flows from self-dissatisfaction and courage (other needs having been satisfied first).

4. The facilitator does not limit the liberty of others to search and to come to their own set of values.

He is mindful that it has always been a central democratic tenet the experience of choosing freely is of profound value.

Nor is the facilitator interested in persuading the Other. He is interested, as an ultimate goal, in the Other enlarging his perceptions, options, and independence; although the Other can choose (Principle 1), having informed himself, to contract his perceptions and independence.

The facilitator does not browbeat, intimidate, mystify, dazzle with his brilliance, or intellectually seduce.

He holds in confidence what he hears, as this usually creates an atmosphere more conducive to searching into oneself.

5. The facilitator does not sexually seduce the Other, nor touch the Other sexually.

The facilitator acknowledges that the Other's awe, fear, longing, flattery, magnification, idealization, or attraction is bestowed upon him--in part--because of the position (status) he occupies; hence the Other cannot make a free choice as a peer to enter a sexual relationship with the facilitator. To be blind to this, tempts exploitation and self-serving on the part of the facilitator and self-deception by the Other.

6. The facilitator proposes beforehand an explicit contract, setting out his goals, his guidelines for realizing them, and his relevant engagement (the ingredients of his conduct). What is required of the participant is set down.

Customarily, the contract is stated in the descriptive brochure or flyer. The facilitator's qualifications are to be public knowledge, information which is usually included in the announcement.

7. The facilitator points out exploitative conduct, and he avoids it.

He calls attention to scapegoating. He disapproves of and attempts to prevent injury to body tissues. He identifies prejudice and stereotyping as socially and individually destructive conduct. He assists members who are attacked to protest and to augment their self-defense. He examines abuse directed at him. He is aware that men do evil (harm), and he does not flinch from recognizing this.

He does not choose favorites.

He usually avoids facetiousness and sarcasm, considering them ineffectual ways to communicate.

8. The facilitator emphasizes growth-promoting conduct.

He values highly the search into oneself; the struggles to recognize and inwardly experience one's emotions in their full range; the risks of disclosing one's thoughts, feelings, and impulses; and the opportunities for bridging the distance to the Other, with its chances of mutually enhancing outcomes.

He does not do for others what they can do for themselves.

9. For both the facilitator and the participants, touching is permitted--the touch of a companion along the way.

To touch is human, humane. An alerting, a solace, a seeker connecting with the Other, flinging a bridge across the separateness.

A touch: A tap of the finger on the knee or arm (to alert the Other). An embrace. A hand on a heaving shoulder. A clasp of the hand. A pat on the head. A jousting poke against the shoulder. A bear hug. 'See-I'm-here-with-you.'

The Other, of course, may decline the touch.

My satisfaction with this group is well known to them. They have shown insight and growth that is far beyond my skills as a facilitator, and for this growth I point to the Holy Spirit. Occasionally the group supported me during my periods of despair, and strangely enough, the group integrity grew from my expressions of pain. I learned much about what it means to be a woman, and have tried to apply my

knowledge to my own marriage. As a group, they touched my life in a way that will register as one of life's peak experiences.

Suggestions for Additional Research

This has been a preliminary exploratory study. Because the sample was so small, no firm predictions or generalizations can be projected from these findings alone. However, the findings are highly suggestive and indicate the need for additional research with larger samples in the following areas as they concern the single parent: divorce as a "normal" station in life, fathers as single parents, suicide as the ultimate divorce, the relationship between hostility and rejection, drug use, separation from church, and the use of single parents and married couples in pre-marriage group counseling. The need is great, the potential is vast, and the population is in need of help.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE

Please answer each of the following:

1. Name _____
2. Address _____
3. Age _____ 4. Sex ()M ()F
5. Race ()Black ()Mexican-American ()Oriental ()White
()Other _____
6. Education (please circle level reached)
Grade 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20
7. Specify any additional training other than high school and/or college.

8. Your religious affiliation ()Catholic ()Jew ()Protestant
()Other--please specify _____ ()None
9. Your marital status: ()Separated ()Divorced ()Widowed
()Never been Married
10. Your age when first married _____
11. Number of years married _____
12. How long have you been in your present marital status? _____
13. Have you been married a second time? _____
14. Occupation of your ex-spouse _____
15. Educational level of your ex-spouse (please circle level reached)
Grade 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20
16. Number of children in your home:

_____ females
 _____ males

_____ ages
 _____ ages

17. Are these your own children ()Yes ()No

18. What is the approximate yearly income you live on?

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| () 0 to 4,000 | () 8,000 to 10,000 |
| () 4,000 to 6,000 | () 10,000 to 12,000 |
| () 6,000 to 8,000 | () 12,000 to 14,000 |
| | () Higher, please specify _____ |

19. Since becoming a single parent have you ever been on welfare?
()Yes ()No

20. Are you now on welfare?()Yes ()No

21. Place of your birth:

(City or Town) (State) (County)

22. In which of the following types of settings were you brought up for *most* of your childhood?

- ()large city ()small city ()Suburb ()Country town
()on a farm ()other, please specify _____

23. Number of brothers and sisters in your childhood family:

Brothers, how many? _____ Sisters, how many? _____

24. In your childhood family, were you: ()an only child
()the youngest child, ()a middle or near middle child,
()the oldest child

25. Marital status of your parents:

(check as necessary)

- ()married
()separated
()divorced
()father widowed
()mother widowed
()father remarried
()mother remarried
()both parents deceased

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE ON COPING

Name _____

ATTITUDES AND FEELINGS (Circle appropriate response)

1. What is your feeling regarding your past?
 - a. Extremely Positive
 - b. Positive
 - c. Mildly Positive
 - d. Mildly Negative
 - e. Negative
 - f. Extremely Negative
2. What is your feeling regarding your ability to meet current situations?
 - a. Extremely Positive
 - b. Positive
 - c. Mildly Positive
 - d. Mildly Negative
 - e. Negative
 - f. Extremely Negative
3. What is your feeling regarding your future?
 - a. Extremely Positive
 - b. Positive
 - c. Mildly Positive
 - d. Mildly Negative
 - e. Negative
 - f. Extremely Negative
4. What is your mood?
 - a. Happy
 - b. Somewhat Happy
 - c. Somewhat Sad
 - d. Sad
5. What would you say is your degree of guilt?
 - a. None
 - b. Mild
 - c. Moderate
 - d. Severe
6. How would you rank your suicide preoccupation?
 - a. None
 - b. Mild
 - c. Moderate
 - d. Severe

HOW DO YOU: (Write down most important response)

1. Keep distress within manageable limits?
2. Maintain a sense of personal worth?
3. Restore relationships with significant other people?

HAVE YOU EVER: (Answer yes or no and indicate briefly how)

1. Sought advance information about a new situation?
2. Sought information about new roles?
3. Sought information about difficulties which may appear in the future?
4. Used friendships in seeking information?
5. Looked for intellectual stimulation through information discussion groups?
6. Pooled information and coping skills?
7. Sought support in times of crisis?
8. Used alternative paths to personal fulfillment?

DO YOU TRY TO: (Answer yes or no and indicate how)

1. Project a clear self-image as an effective doer?
2. Mobilize new combinations of skills?
3. Use other peers as resource persons?
4. Recenter your efforts for a long-term purpose?
5. Use interpersonal support?
6. Use self-manipulation of feelings and attitudes to maintain self-worth?

DO YOU FEEL THAT: (Answer yes or no and indicate how)

1. Coping skills acquired in a previous period in your life have helped you in another more recent period?
2. Being held or cuddled somehow helps you to cope?
3. There is a supportive function in shared experiences?
4. There is usefulness in worry?
5. Fantasy of future behavior is useful?
6. Having succeeded once--the next time is easier?

WHAT IS THE: (Write down most important response)

1. Hardest thing you have to cope with?
2. Most used method of coping for you?
3. Worst way of coping for you?
4. Feeling you have when you are coping?
5. Feeling you have when you are not coping?
6. Ways the group has helped you to cope?

LIST OF STRATEGIES: (Answer by placing the appropriate symbol):

- 0 never
- 1 sometimes
- 2 very often
- 3 all the time

1. Try to find out more about the situation; seek additional information.
2. Talk with others about the problem (friend, relative, professional person).
3. Try to see the humorous aspects of the situation.
4. Don't worry about it. Everything will probably work out fine.
5. Become involved in other activities in order to keep your mind off the problem.
6. Take some positive, concerted action on the basis of your present understanding of the situation.
7. Be prepared to expect the worst.
8. Make several alternate plans for handling the situation--after all you never know which might work.
9. Draw upon your past experiences; perhaps you've been in a similar situation before.
10. Try to reduce the tension (drink, eat, smoke, exercise, pills).

The questions in the various parts of the Questionnaire on Coping were obtained from the following sources:

The questions in ATTITUDES AND FEELINGS were adapted from Henry Wechsler, *et al.*, "The Depression Rating Scale," *Archives of General Psychiatry*, IX (1963), 334-343.

The questions in HOW DO YOU and WHAT IS THE were constructed by myself.

The questions in HAVE YOU EVER and DO YOU FEEL THAT were adapted from Earle Silber, *et al.*, "Adaptive Behavior in Competent Adolescents," *Archives of General Psychiatry*, V (1961), 354-365.

The questions in DO YOU TRY TO were adapted from George V. Coelho, *et al.*, "Coping Strategies in a New Learning Environment," *Archives of General Psychiatry*, IX (1963), 433-443.

The statements in the LIST OF STRATEGIES was taken from Allan Sidle, *et al.*, "Development of a Coping Scale," *Archives of General Psychiatry*, XX (1969), 226-232.

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